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Introduction

On the Subject of the Nation focuses on the dense entanglement of the personal and political in the writings produced over a twenty-four-year period spanning the final years of the Marcos dictatorship, the so-called Edsa (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) Revolution, the administrative turnovers from Corazon Aquino to Fidel Ramos to Joseph Estrada to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and the various conflicts—ideological, political, social, economic, ethnic, and religious—that gave rise to the Communist armed struggle, the Moro separatist movements, and Edsa Dos and Tres.

Marked by deep-seated political instability, economic inequality, and social crisis, which are visible in the relentless physical movement of millions of Filipinos within and beyond the Philippines, the eighties and nineties were basically characterized by the intensification of globalized capitalist processes through the “structural adjustment” policies of the International Monetary Fund, which “of-

lered poor countries the same poisoned chalice of devaluation, privatization, removal of import controls and food subsidies, enforced cost-recovery in health and education, and ruthless downsizing of the public sector" (Davis 2004, 18; see also Bello 2002) and resulted in economic stagnation, unemployment and immiseration of urban and rural populations, environmental destruction, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor (for the Philippine case, see Bello 2000, 238–57; Broad and Cavanagh 1993).¹ The United Nations' Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) 2003 report (cited in Davis 2004, 7) traced the increase in poverty and inequality on the global level during the 1980s and 1990s to the "retreat of the state" (19) and the diminution of state capacity to provide welfare services, enforce laws, clamp down on crime, neutralize class and ethnic tensions, eliminate corruption, and control the flow of money, jobs, production facilities, people, drugs, and pollution.

The devolution of state powers to local government and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) has been partly spurred by the global ideological turn toward neoclassical economics, which argues for less reliance on governmental intervention and more on the workings of the "free" market.² Media coverage of the acceleration of global capitalism has couched this phenomenon in the language of triumphal "democratization" following the breakup of the Soviet Union into independent nation-states across Eastern Europe and the end of the "developmental state"³ regimes in East Asia. Yet at the same time that global capitalism has spawned new nation-states in Eastern Europe, it has occasioned the so-called general crisis of the nation-state in Western Europe. Popular perception of this "crisis" has been heightened by media reports on the creation of the European Union and the introduction of the Euro currency, on the flurry of transnational corporations moving and operating across bounded political spaces, and on the emergence of new social formations such as feminist, ecological, ethnic, religious, communal, and local defense movements.

This period is marked as well by the crisis of Marxism, which had long provided the most far-reaching critique of, and alternative to,

capitalism. The breakdown of "socialist" statist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, the revisionist path taken by China under Deng Xiaoping's "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (with slogans such as "to get rich is good" and "it doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it can catch mice"), along with the perceived crisis of the nation-state in Western Europe, all appear to question the theoretical and practical tenets of Marxism.

The crisis (and subsequent resurgence) of the Philippine Left and the international labor migration of Filipinos are the two pivotal events upon which this book hinges. They are not simply the most visible manifestations of the Philippines' insertion into global capitalism and the new, American-dominated, "neoliberal" world order that is founded on the tenets of "sound money," "self-regulating markets," and an "individualism" that is opposed to "big government." The revolutionary movement and the international labor migration of Filipinos represent two classic responses to social crisis: stay and struggle against the system or leave and seek opportunities elsewhere. They provide occasions to reflect on the implications of global and local developments for the Philippine nation-state, for the concepts of nationhood, sovereignty, and citizenship, and ideas of belonging, home, patriotic love, affect, sacrifice, and political engagement that buttress them.

These concepts of nationness—of what it means to call oneself "Filipino" and live (and die) as Filipino—have political and cultural organizing force, even as they carry existential and imaginative meanings and associations. It is the tangible and intangible features of national attachment that concern this book. The chapters that follow subject to close scrutiny the material, ideational, and affective bearings of the Philippine nation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, locating them in—if not gleaning them from—the thoughts, actions, emotions, dreams, aspirations, and strivings of individual and collective Filipinos.

Even though their functions and *raison d'être* are undergoing redefinition, nationalism and nation-states, which offer one answer to

the human need and longing for community, are far from being rendered obsolete in the age of globalization.⁴ This can be seen in the resurgence and continuing assertion of ethnonationalism and nationalist ideologies in various parts of the world. Far from representing anomalies that deviate from the "homogeneity of globalization," these resurgent nationalisms are partly reactions to the rhetoric, practices, and impact of globalization, and are in fact partly also determined by them (Juergensmeyer 2002, 4). Moreover, as the failure of the United Nations to intervene in the American invasion of Iraq shows, the absence of a world order capable of regulating conflicts among nation-states and enforcing universal norms and regulations without exceptions on a supranational level has meant that nation-states retain their importance as political agents that may either promote capitalism and deepen its penetration of society or else serve as a buffer against the negative effects of capitalism. Just as multinational corporations work through nation-states and retain their "nominal nationalities" (Reich 1991), worldwide demonstrations against corporate-driven globalization such as the recent World Social Forum held in Mumbai (which included 400 participants from the Philippines) and, just across the road, the alternative world social forum Mumbai Resistance (supported by the Communist Party of the Philippines) rely on the coordination of mass mobilization within nation-states to push for the creation of institutions capable of addressing issues of social inequality, justice, and change.

Thus far, the ideal of an international civil society organized around the communicative space opened up by advances in information technology and international mass media has only been realizable for, and accessible to, a privileged, mobile minority of the economic, political, and intellectual elite. The kind of global identity engendered in this domain remains on the whole less concerned with questions of attachment and belonging than with networking, opportunities, and goals.

Far more crucially, the transnationalization of production has resulted in the decontextualization of labor, its removal from the

center stage of capitalist imagination in favor of the alluring magic of a seemingly "autonomous," market-driven, speculative, finance capital (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 300, 303). If consumption has now become the "privileged site for the fabrication of self and society, of culture and identity" (299) and wealth can now be generated from the "thin air" of investments and management, cyberspace, and intellectual property rights (315), this aspect of global capitalism which is dominated by "fiction, fantasy, the immaterial (particularly money), fictitious capital, images, [and] ephemerality" (Harvey 1989, 339) masks the real, concrete conditions of exploitation, subsistence, and marginalization of entire populations elsewhere in the world, where the production processes have migrated.⁵ The one-billion strong global informal working class constitutes around two-fifths of the economically active population of the developing world (Davis 2004, 24), and its survival and subsistence activities—massively "feminized" as a result of women's labor participation in the informal sector—account for 33 to 40 percent of urban employment in Asia (25). Mass pauperization assumes its most visible form in the proliferation of slums surrounding the heavily guarded ghettos of the rich in various megacities such as Manila and Jakarta.

Whether taken as cultural artifact or narrative act, or condemned as repressive and masculinist, or celebrated for their liberatory potential, commonsensical notions of nation and nationness have to be rethought to accommodate new forms of life experiences, membership, community and belonging, and new claims made on state and society. *Subject of the Nation* interrogates Philippine nationness in light of the crisis of the revolutionary Left and the outward movement of Filipinos in the age of globalization. It is specifically concerned with the ways in which global, regional, national, and local developments impact on both individual and collective, public and private levels. It examines the specific, critical interface between self and community in light of the ongoing redefinition of the nation, and asks: What kind of "community effects" or forms of belonging (Balibar 2004, 21) and identities are generated by the currently mutating nation-form?

The title of the book plays on the two senses of the word "subject." On the one hand, *Subject of the Nation* seeks to unpack the assumptions which inform the idea and practice of nationness, and, therefore, takes the nation as its object of inquiry or topic. On the other hand, it is also about subjectivity and subjectification, about ways of producing an enunciating and experiencing body; ways of understanding, addressing, and constructing selfhood; about how one comes to identify herself and live, speak, and act as a national subject and agent of history.

It has been argued that nationalist and activist notions and narratives of collective struggle and political agency are "haunted" by theories of subjectivity, particularly ideologies of individualism (Bose 2003, 6). This is because nationalism and individualism have the same epistemic assumptions: Nations, like individuals, are posited as having an objective existence, and endowed with specific attributes and attitudes encapsulated in their distinctive, place- and climate-shaped "character" (Romani 2002). In fact, nations are often conceived as "a collective individual" and "a collection of individuals" (Handler 1988, 39, cited in Bose 2003, 6), imbued with individuated, autonomous consciousness and agency at once rooted in and going beyond their respective members' capacities and lifetimes, and capable of exercising will and choice to determine their present and future. Nations lend themselves to being apprehended as individual, even as individuals offer themselves as a synecdoche of the national collective (Foster 1991, 253, cited in Bose 2003, 7).

Although nations and nationalism often rely on the ideology of the unique, free, self-reflecting, and self-determining individual, certain oppositional forms of nationalist struggle actually call into question the coherence, autonomy, and sovereignty of the individual by exposing the individual's self-difference, implication in group practices and dynamics, and partial "subjection" to material, political, and linguistic structures and processes. This book looks into the tensions and contradictions, as well as the limitations and possibilities, inherent in efforts to think through the relationship between individual

striving and collective agency. It analyzes the material conditions which inform the Filipino nation, state, community, and collective action but it is also about how nation, state, community, and collective activism are experienced and actualized by members (and in some cases nonmembers), about how they shape and are in turn shaped by discourses and practices of individuality and personhood. Identity in this book is less a monolithic construction based on an uncritical embracing of race-class-gender categories than a politically and culturally negotiated and contingent marker of the complex and mutually constitutive relationship between self and social being. Far from simply determining or "fixing" identity, material forces also unsettle identity and endow individuals with the power to remake it, and to remake the nation as well, through forms of individual and collective action. The subject of the nation, taken both conceptually and materially, is, therefore, the "site" where global and local ideas, practices, histories, and processes are conceived and lived, as well as the site of political, social, and cultural projects for transformation.

Subject of the Nation explores the multifarious ways in which narrating the nation and narrating the self draw on a set of literary conventions, most often associated with the genre of auto/biography or personal accounts, to construct their respective, yet interlocking "experiences." It is concerned with the complex, lived dimension of nationness, and with the representational strategies for depicting, decoding, and ultimately deconstructing "experience." This book highlights the specific ways and contexts in which the individual and the collective, and the connections between them, are constituted in theory and practice; and shows how narratives can play an important role in theorizing and realizing these connections while offering ways of working through their often fraught relationship.

Subject of the Nation takes up both fictional and nonfictional works, mining their rich lode of techniques, subject matter, and narrative voices to uncover insights into Philippine realities and sensibilities today. Its choice of texts also extends the mining metaphor. With the exception of *To Suffer Thy Comrades*, the works taken up in this book are

relatively unknown to the Filipino reading public in the Philippines, and in many instances "noncanonical" and even "nonliterary." While Bai Ren and Peter Bacho have solid reputations respectively in China and America, their works have not been generally available in the Philippines. Robert Garcia's mainstream book is not read as a literary work, and not likely to be taught and read in literature courses. Tatang (now deceased) and Zelda Soriano addressed their works to a politicized audience, while Rey Ventura published his book in Great Britain.

There is a sense in which the works discussed in this book are ungrounded as well. Three of them were published, quite literally, "aboveground," or more properly, outside Philippine territory—*Nanyang Piaoliuji* in China and Hong Kong, *Cebu* in America, and *Underground in Japan* in England—while two others, Tatang's autobiography and Zelda Soriano's *Kung-Saan Ako Pupunta* were published "underground." The different material and ideological contexts within which these works were conceived and crafted are in themselves a revealing commentary on the kind of "deterritorialized" Philippines, and the times and circumstances they strive to chronicle and depict.

Chapter 1 tackles the question of how one becomes a nationalist by examining the migration experience recounted in a Chinese semiautobiographical novel, Bai Ren's *Nanyang Piaoliuji*, which deals with the formation of nationalist consciousness of "aliens" in the Philippines who are held to stand outside the bounds of the imagined Filipino community. It argues that the Philippine-grown and -nurtured "Chinese" nationalism that informed the Chinese Filipinos' historic participation in the anti-Japanese resistance struggle in the Philippines during World War II actually challenges the assumptions of conventional scholarship on nationalism, scholarship that erroneously views the patriotic consciousness of the overseas Chinese as an unproblematic extension of mainland Chinese nationalism standing apart from, and often in antagonism to, Philippine nationalism. The radical nationalism of the Chinese communist immigrants took shape precisely through their Philippine experiences and not only related but contributed to the discourse and imagination of

Filipino radical nationalism. For these reasons, it forces a redefinition of basic conceptions of loyalty, belonging, labor, and love that underpin commonsensical as well as scholarly notions of nationalism.

Chapter 2 looks at the unraveling (followed by painful reconstruction) of the radical nationalist vision of a Filipino community of struggle by analyzing accounts of the anti-informer campaigns that collectively catalyzed the crisis of the Philippine Left and the setbacks it suffered. These campaigns exemplify the "excesses" of the movement in the sense that they not only violate the norms of thought and action espoused by the revolutionary movement itself, but put into serious question the way in which the movement has conducted its revolution. These excesses are routinely theorized by recourse to a battery of metaphors relating to the body. Focusing on one such account of the purges, *To Suffer Thy Comrades*, this chapter explores the ways in which the book, as well as critical reception of the book, takes up the question of the purge as "personal experience," especially the way in which the victims' experience and memory of the purge produce a semantic "excess" that demands interpretation yet exceeds the bounds of a single, cohesive interpretation. It examines the mediating role of experience, particularly assumptions about the self that underpin this idea of experience, in the representational economy—that is, the system of assumptions and figures of speech or tropes that in turn shape and organize the management or administration—of the purges. These questions of experience and the self also resonate in the attempts on the part of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to come to terms with its "excesses."

Chapter 3 explores the auto/biographical dimension of the process of nation formation. It argues that telling the nation's "life story" is an intrinsic aspect of constituting the nation as a form of community. Auto/biographical narratives not only produce individuals by means of rhetorical and substantive strategies of representation, these same strategies enable "the people" to produce themselves as historical and political subjects. This braiding of the exceptional and the exemplary—the idea that one is both individual and typical and,

therefore, linked to other lives, other selves—is deployed by the auto/biography *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway Talamuhay ni Tatang Tungki* holds up a reinvigorated notion of auto/biography as a potentially progressive genre for recuperating and empowering politically marginalized voices, thereby recasting the terms of nationalist representation (understood as proxy and portrait) in potentially liberating ways.

Chapter 4 reads the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army (NPA) activist and warrior Zelda Soriano's collection of fiction and poetry, *Kung Saan Ako Pupunta*, via Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere*, as exemplifying nationalist efforts to think through the imperative of engendering the revolutionary body. These efforts foreground gender issues that highlight women's problematic relation to nationalist discourse and practice. The chapter argues that while the issue of women's emancipation is crucial for mobilizing people in the struggle for liberation, the political identities it posits are inflected by gender hierarchies which tend to downplay, if not vitiate, the conceptual, political, and experiential salience of women's active participation in the revolutionary struggle. Drawing on feminist critiques of patriarchal nationalism, this chapter explores alternative formulations of nationalism and processes of en-gendering the revolutionary body that spotlight the specificity of women's activism and contribution to the theorizing and creation of new forms of sociopolitical and artistic intervention in Philippine society.

Chapter 5 focuses on how the power relations that structure the interstate system in the new world order make themselves felt in the form of traumatic encounters between multiple "homes" and nations. The historically intimate but fraught relationship between the Philippines and America is the centerpiece of the Filipino-American novel *Cebu*. Peter Bacho's novel lays bare the identity politics made possible by the conjoining of two symbolic processes—the process of differentiating geopolitical and cultural spaces in the form of nations, and the process of differentiating gender by ascribing specific attributes to women. Inequalities that structure economic and political relationships within and among nations are metaphorically rendered in terms

of relations between sexes, and are particularly salient for second-generation Filipino Americans, who negotiate different national spaces both literally and symbolically. Anxieties about sexual and cultural differences, as well as national origins, express themselves in terms of an "identity crisis" which involves the drawing, breaching, and re-drawing of boundaries and borders on the subjective level. *Cebu* affords insight not only into the origins of such an identity crisis, but into the spatial dynamics of power, the limits of political imagination which inform the constitution of identity, and the ways in which personal ties and relationships are informed and regulated by the social environment and its guiding ideologies.

The final chapter looks at the Filipino labor diaspora and identifies the bases and processes of "identity making" of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). The autobiographical and ethnographic *Underground in Japan* attests to the fact that while global capitalism has encouraged the unrestricted circulation of capital across borders, labor flows continue to be subject to regulation by nation-states. *Underground* offers a telling account of how OFWs are abstracted as labor power and exposes the complicity of labor-sending and labor-receiving nation-states in transnational capitalism. Ventura's account reveals the mechanisms by which Filipino labor is constructed as "illegal" and "foreign" and "unskilled" by the Japanese state, precisely in order to curb its potential political significance and power. At the same time, the Philippine state casts the OFW in heroic terms as self-sacrificing *bagong bayani* (new heroes) the better to tap into the flows of their remittances. The chapter argues, however, that the complex interaction between state and nation—as mediated by the life, labor, and discourse of the OFW—can potentially lead to the redefinition of "the state" by exposing its reliance on the migrant labor it attempts to regulate, and asks how this redefinition might also force a careful reconsideration of nationness, the lived experience of nation and belonging to a national community.

On the Subject of the Nation strives to account for the specific limits as well as potentials of nationalist thought and practice by reading

narratives that reflect on the conditions of (im)possibility of the nation as lived experience and as political project. The arguments are spread out and developed over a series of self-contained chapters, with key concepts such as labor, money, state, pedagogy, sacrifice, body, gender, and representation being taken up and elaborated across chapters rather than confined within single-chapter discussions. Readers will note that running through all these chapters are different concepts of utopia embodied by revolution and migration.⁶ As Fredric Jameson has argued in "The Politics of Utopia" (2004; see also P. Anderson's gloss, 2004), utopias either envision a different human nature or an alternative social order. The commitment of revolution and seduction of migration build on the human desire and capacity for change, on the human dream of freedom from necessity and a better future. Where one seeks to abolish alienated labor by reorganizing and transforming society, the other seeks optimal rewards for labor by maximizing the existing intellectual and material resources and institutions of late capitalism. These utopian visions serve as "symbolic token[s] over which essentially political struggles still help us to differentiate left and right" (Jameson 2004, 35), since the conceptual frameworks used to flesh out these visions and the solutions they propose to resolve the problems of reality necessarily reflect specific historical and class views and positions (47). These visions tend to flourish "not in times of revolutionary upheavals as such, when popular demands concentrate on a short-list of immediate practical priorities—so to speak, bread, land and peace—but in the calm before the storm, when institutional arrangements appear unchangeable, but minds have been set free by some still unseen tectonic shifts to reinvent the world" (P. Anderson 2004, 67).⁷

Utopian visions emerge out of the "excesses" (Hau 2000a, 6–8) generated by nation making, excesses in the form of "the foreigner," "error," "the people," "women," "the abject Philippines," and "the unauthorized worker" that determine but cannot be fully contained within the parameters of conventional ways of understanding and doing both literature and politics. The notion of "excess"—that which

informs, but which cannot be fully grasped or encompassed by, nation making—imposes limits which complicate the idea of human freedom posited by utopian visions and reveals the contamination of our humanness by the inhuman (state, money, and technology, for instance). By showing how our humanity is necessarily implicated in, and in fact partly produced by, material forces not entirely of our making,⁸ the concept of excess challenges us to produce more nuanced accounts of the relationship between self and collective, private and public, the personal and the political while helping to redefine the bases and goals of (re)making both community and state. Far from advocating political and intellectual passivity or indifference, this book attests to the survival—the living on—of the popular nationalist imperative of social transformation, and the promise of revolution. Each of the chapters that follow offers terms for thinking through the challenge of bringing about social change in Philippine nationalist theory and practice.

situations where their interests or cultural ideals cannot spontaneously converge, but also cannot completely diverge without risking mutual destruction (or common elimination by external forces)" (emphasis original, Balibar 2004, 132, citing Gunsteren 1998).

Finally, what the "excesses" tell us is that the promise of revolution remains alive despite the trauma of the purges. This promise "of an absolutely other future testifies to hope even in the bloodiest pasts" (Hamacher 1999, 197). For no critique of religion or revolution, however imperative or thoroughgoing, can annul the struggle to live, and the belief and faith that underpin all knowledge and all political action and in particular, all revolutions (Derrida 1999, 255–56). Nor can purges completely purge faith in revolution from a revolutionary injunction (260). The power of revolution ultimately lies in the living visions and energies of those who make revolution, of those who continue to work to bring about changes in Philippine society. Despite the setbacks suffered by the CPP, there is little indication that the Left, though fragmented, is on the wane.¹⁶ Rosa Luxemburg put it aptly when she declared: "Revolution is the only form of 'war' in which ultimate victory can only be prepared by a series of 'defeats'" (quoted in Singer 1999, 278).

Autobiography and History

IF A COUNTRY'S HISTORY IS ITS BIOGRAPHY," stated novelist Linda Ty-Casper, "its literature is its autobiography. . . ." (quoted in Manlapaz 2003, 57). Casper's remark bears out the auto/biographical dimension of nation formation in the sense that telling the nation's "life story" is an intrinsic aspect of constituting the nation as a specific form of community.¹ In fact, the nation's capacity for self-representation may very well be indistinguishable from its capacity for self-constitution.²

This is because the link between nation and narration, as Benedict Anderson (1991, 6) has argued, has its basis in the problem of constructing individual identity. Concepts of personhood are generated out of a fundamental failure of consciousness—the impossibility of remembering everything that has happened in the course of a life-span fuels both the desire for continuity guaranteed by a sense of identity, and the incitement to represent that identity, typically

through narration. Nations and persons share in the affliction of amnesia, and it is precisely this forgetting or loss of fragments of their respective experiential histories that fosters their need for a "history of identity."

Yet Anderson (1991, 205) also notes an important difference between biographical narratives of persons and nations.

In the secular story of the "person" there is a beginning and an end. She emerges from parental genes and social circumstances onto a brief historical stage, there to play a role until her demise. After that, nothing but the penumbra of lingering fame or infamy. . . . Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography can not be written evangelically, "down time," through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it "up time" towards Peking Man, Java Man, King Arthur, wherever the lamp of archeology casts its fitful gleam. This fashioning, however, is marked by deaths, which, in a curious inversion of conventional genealogy, start from an originary present. World War II begins World War I; out of Sedan comes Austerlitz; the ancestor of the Warsaw Uprising is the state of Israel.

Despite their nebulous beginnings and unforeseeable endings, nations cloak themselves in the mantle of inevitability by interweaving history and their own stories so tightly that it is often difficult to imagine history as being anything other than a history of the nation. The meaning and significance of the nation become coextensive with history; indeed, the nation's auto/biography often becomes synonymous with history per se, and comes to be taught in schools accordingly. The geopolitical specificity of the nation in turn describes the life terms of its "people" through their *reduction*—the fixing and fabricating of minds and bodies—and (re)orientation to a particular "national" history.

What we generally call "modernity" is a shorthand for the century-long global transformations of everyday life that created—by 1914, at least in the status of norm—a world system of nation states. In this world system, the nation-state achieves theoretical and practical hegemony as the dominant unit of political, economic, social, and ideological thought, as well as the privileged agent of political, economic, social, and ideological action.

The nation-state embodies a particular concentration, distribution, and use of power as well as a particular organization of social life within a bounded geographical territory (Hobsbawm 1989, 164-167). Its historical formation is inseparable from the "concentration" of its capabilities for acting within the international system: for maintaining the territorial integrity of its "geo-body" (Hobsbawm 1989, 16-17); for extracting and regulating resources and power; for herding people, goods, capital, ideas (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 1989) for establishing particular institutions and organizations that embody certain forms of political, social, cultural, or economic organization; and, most crucial, for mobilizing the population for large-scale endeavors by forging links among its inhabitants, fostering their sense of themselves both as individuals and as members of a larger collectivity, and cementing their attachment and commitment to each other and to the nation-state (A. Smith 1998, 20).

The rhetoric and practice of "nation building" assumed signal importance in the second half of the twentieth century as the key strategy of attaining nation-statehood. It may not be farfetched to think of nation building as a discursive project in which existing states attempt to imagine and realize their nations through models of policy planning and implementation. Scholarly literature on modernization even depicts the reorganization of political life through the establishment of new institutions and the concomitant "training" of individuals in the habits and values of citizenship with the story of nation building: "National development is nation-building" (Finkle and Gable 1966, 46).

The state's reach and function rest on the idea of "sovereign power" (Agamben 1998), that is, on the foundational and legitimating

principle of the state's supreme command over life within its borders and its authority to act on behalf of its "community" vis-à-vis other states. Moreover, political theory characteristically addresses the question of sovereignty of states by *personifying* states as subjects, constituting states within the international system as "absolute individuals with a 'natural' tendency toward self-preservation" (Balibar 2004, 141). While the sovereignty of nation-states conceives of the nation-state as a subject endowed with agency, the constructionist overtones of "building" a nation have also meant that the nation comes to be thought of in almost mechanical terms as a project that requires the "application of design and technical devices to matter" (A. Smith 1998, 3). This application involves a multipronged development of politics, economy, culture, and population (Szporluk 1988, 164). Scholars differ on which cultural and financial mechanisms—mass education, communications and technology, industrial growth, fiscal planning, citizenship training, mass mobilization, and cultural identity formation—serve as functional *sine qua non* of the nation-building agenda of the modernizing nation-state.⁴

For all the differences in their emphases on aspects of nation building, scholars do agree that the "integration" efforts of the nation-state in establishing authority and administering both territory and people presume the theoretical importance and practical challenge not just of linking the government and the governed (Weiner 1965), but in actually *producing* the governed.

The modern state "found itself having to take notice of the opinions of its subjects and citizens, because its political arrangements gave them a voice—generally through various kinds of elected representatives—and/or because the state needed their practical consent or activity in other ways, e.g., as taxpayers or as potential conscript soldiers" (Hobsbawm 1992, 80). This move on the part of the sovereign state to organize society consists, at least in part, of the formation—or as Etienne Balibar, following Louis Althusser (2001, 85–126), argues, interpellation or hailing—of national subjects as individuals (Balibar 2004, 144). Transforming subjects into indi-

viduals and individuals into subjects does not merely entail forcibly subjecting individuals to the state; rather, the state constructs individual "subjectivity" to elicit the subjects' loyalty and obedience. This individuation of the population is enabled by technologies of mass education, health and morality programs, and other means of fostering patriotic love or civic spirit.

But equally crucial to this endeavor to link state and individual subjects is the fundamental challenge in nation formation of producing "the people" (Balibar 1991, 93–94): "More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community. Or again, it is to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes, 'as a people,' that is, as the basis and origin of political power." Subjects come to see the state as "their own," conduct their struggles within the political arena created by the state, and articulate their aspirations and call for reform or revolution in terms of "transforming" the state. In this sense, the state as an institution holds itself up as an instrument of "the people," so that even plutocratic or authoritarian governments claim to exercise power in the interest of the majority. While states invoke "the people" often to serve their own interests, "the people" remains a powerful source and reference point of political legitimacy and decision (Balibar 2004, 184), on which both states and antistate challenges anchor their respective projects. Thus, while a number of scholars have gone so far as to argue in favor of a strong, if not natural, affinity between nation-states and so-called liberal democracy (Kymlicka 2001, 224), few contest the idea that nation building entails a certain "democratization" of politics, whether the government be self-avowedly democratic or communist or authoritarian.

One of the most meaningful legacies of historic revolutions over the last two hundred years has been the attribution of sovereignty and power to "the people." The politics of nation building has a special salience in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, which have been subject to colonial rule. During the period of decolonization, especially from the 1940s to the 1970s, the newly independent, popular nation was

held up as the agent of sustainable development, social change, redistributive justice, and cultural self-preservation. For countries such as the Philippines, national agendas after the declaration of independence have been dominated by modernization and development—a global project that presupposed and required the existence of states, preferably strong ones.

It is, in fact, on the principal condition of taking the form of the state that nations can enter the “modern” world system. This condition is so basic to obtaining recognition in the international arena as to become commonsensical, but it also necessitates that political and cultural communities be recognized not just as nation-states in form or on paper, but in substance and reality. Communities need to be “made,” and made into nation-states, even as these communities themselves took shape within established institutions and territorial boundaries inherited from their former colonizers. Moreover, the bounded territorial space of such “national” communities have to be filled with political, economic, and cultural “subjects” of the nation, whose needs and aspirations can be articulated, and whose activities can be channeled to specific, purposive ends, by the state. The project of building the nation-state draws substantively on, even as it undertakes the project of producing citizen-subjects.

The tendency to think of nation building in terms of a modular plan that needs to be put into effect or implemented is starkly evident in much of the scholarship on nation building in the “Third World” (not to mention pronouncements of leaders of those countries), most of which view nation building as a matter of “importing” or “applying” western norms and models to postcolonial realities.⁵ The failure of nation-building projects—mired in the corruption of the leaders and the continued impoverishment, exploitation, and disempowerment of the population—in many of the former colonies in Asia and Africa continually breaks down the relationship between state and society, and has since necessitated a rethinking of basic assumptions about nation building, and about the “nation” that is supposed to be built (Fanon 1963).

For in actuality, the nation-state creates new forms of social stratification in which people are accorded formal equality (i.e., are equal under the law) in the face of existing social and economic inequalities (Elias 1970, 274–79). National integration of sociocultural or ethnic differences (which were partly fabricated by the state itself or, in the case of the Philippines, by successive states run by Spaniards, Americans, and Filipinos) in the service of modernization and development has proven to be violent and exclusionary to many people in everyday life while perpetuating the power and institutional entrenchment of a select few.⁶

The discrepancy between formal equality and actual inequality invests “the people” with double significance: Just as “the people” have generally been acknowledged to be the source and origin of political power, thereby defining the horizon of all nationalist intellectual thought and political practice, “the people” are also seen specifically as a potent force capable not only of underpinning and legitimizing the state, but of destabilizing and destroying it as well. “The people” are the basis of the state’s *raison d’être* and yet they are seen as the greatest potential threat to the state, a threat that has to be contained, neutralized, or suppressed. The power of the people can, therefore, be harnessed both for and against the state that helped produce “the people” as a people.

The most vexing problem of postcolonial nations in dealing with the question of “the people” has been the fraught issue of representation, understood here in the intimately connected but conceptually distinct senses of “speaking for,” as in politics” (proxy), and “re-presentation,” as in art or philosophy” (portrait).⁷ To be more precise, the problem has been the state’s role in upholding and maintaining neocolonial socioeconomic divisions and inequalities precisely through its national “integration” of the population, and its neutralizing of the social antagonism generated by class contradictions.

Resil Mojares (1994) cogently documents the ways in which elections, the key institution and arena for the exercise of politics in the Philippines since the early twentieth century (so much so that it

has come to stand in for politics, if not "democracy" itself), work not simply to cement the power of local, regional, and national elite through the extensive use of the mass media, which they own. Far more alarming, however, is how elections effectively restrict the field of political thought and action by delimiting public space in such a way as to define who can speak and act, who gets heard and is able to get things done, what political choices are thinkable and available, and what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate political behavior. The irony of the Philippines' highly touted claim to having one of the freest mass media systems in Asia is that the apparently democratic character of the media masks the media's capacity to subtly discourage real dialogue and discussion. Freedom of the press in effect is the freedom of the media owners to attack their enemies and push for their own interest.

The exclusionary and exploitative underside of electoral politics has direct implications for the politics of representation, in both senses of *speaking for* and *speaking of* "the people." If the ability of electoral politics to adequately represent the people is cast into doubt, we are forced to reconsider our basic assumptions about political participation.

Efforts to link the government to the governed—efforts that form the basis of representative politics which endow elected officials with the privilege of speaking "for" other Filipinos—have a history, and are, for this reason, discursively constructed. Attempts to conjoin government and governed are not just the main "subject" of official nationalist discourse, they are the main "object" of nationalist policy and practice.

These narratives persistently come up against the thorny problem of defining the nation through the power invested in "the people." For one thing, what exactly is this nation and whose nation is it? The lack of precision of the term "nation," however, has never gotten in the way of political practice. In fact, the very vagueness of that term may have actually enhanced political practice (Vincent 2002, 39). It is precisely because the "nation" lends itself to different interpretations

that it can be used by different groups of people for different purposes. It may not be farfetched to claim that the intellectual opaqueness of the nation is one of the conditions for the exercise of politics in the Philippines.

The politics of representation must deal with the vexed idea of "the people." The people imply an organic totality or collectivity, but also a mass or multiplicity with contradictory, if not conflicting, claims and interests. For this reason, historical representation is very much a political issue, since history serves as "scaffolding" (Ileto 2002) on which the nation-state constructs "the people" on which it anchors its rationale for existence, its policies, and its practices. In this sense, writings of and on history—even scholarly ones—cannot be treated as abstract commentaries on something called Filipino nationalism. These writings are part and parcel of nationalism, not least in the ways in which both state and society have marshaled these writings about the past to claim legitimacy and validate practice, and in doing so, contribute to fashioning the myths, articulating the aspirations, and formulating the policies of the nation.

Since historical meanings and symbols encode power relations, the often vociferous if not violent contention over "correct" or "valid" interpretations of Philippine history points to real and existing political investments on the part of those who participate in the debate, even as silence also points to the effective marginalization of certain groups and classes of people—notably women, minorities, indigents, rebels (often considered "criminals")—from that debate. Historians must perforce contend in their writings with questions like: Do historiographies that have tended to mainly focus on the lives of leaders do so to the exclusion of the followers and nonfollowers? How can a "nationalist" historiography adequately and accurately depict "the people"? Are historians, who function as biographers of their nations, using the wrong intellectual conventions when they undertake to write the story of their nation through the filtered lives and lenses of the prominent and the well-to-do? To what kinds of political uses can historians' interpretations of Philippine history be used?

Alfred W. McCoy (2000, 1) has argued that biography is "a central, sharply contested form of Filipino literary and political expression":

Indeed, the maintenance of the nation requires a canon of model lives, while at the same time the nation creates the patterns or structures according to which actual lives are lived. But nations are also inherently unstable, ambivalent, and contested forms. These tensions are expressed in shifts in the biographical canon, debates over heroes, alternative biographies, and, of course, the persistence of hagiographical writing about national heroes. (Ibid., 3)

But it is not merely the tension underlying the nation as a contested form that accounts for the canonical changes, the proliferation of alternative biographies, and such. Biography itself as a genre is an unstable and contested form, not least because it rests on a logic of representation that is rife with contradictions. The reliance of historiography on biographical accounts of "key historical figures" points to a vexing paradox at the heart of representation.

In this sense, the numerous auto/biographies put out by politicians come election time are not just campaign materials or savvy gimmicks targeted at literate voters or the product of politicians' predilection for self-aggrandizement.⁸ Fleshing out one's bio-data in lengthy prose narrative form carries within it the germ of a wish, a desire to put oneself forward not as an abstract person but as a national subject who shares in the national history of its "people" and whose life, achievement, goals, and strivings mirror those of "the people" themselves.⁹ Here, auto/biographical narratives produce selves by means of rhetorical and substantive strategies of representation through which other selves, and even "the people," can produce themselves as historical and political subjects. It is this compound of the exceptional and the exemplary—the idea that one is both individual and typical—that allows politicians to advance the claim that they are capable of representing the people. The desire for and practice of auto/

biography underpin the logic and exigency of representative politics, indeed of politics—and history understood in the double senses of object of study and verbal account—in the modern nation-state itself (Joseph 1997, 53). The subject's capacity to represent herself in writing finds its political expression in her capacity to represent herself in voting.

This chapter reads the auto/biography *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway: Talambuhay ni Tatang* (On the Tip of the Enemy's Nose: Diary of Tatang; Lacara 1988)¹⁰ as a text that offers important insights into, as well as potential challenges to, the political thinking and practices that inform the auto/biography of the Philippine nation as a story of collective "growth" and "development" over the last eighty years. *Tungki* is the auto/biography of a Filipino nationalist¹¹ whose life does not simply encompass the same period of his country's growth and development, but is coextensive with the history of revolutionary aspiration and struggle in that period, and more specifically with the history of the Communist Party of the Philippines.¹²

Here, personal narrative and national narrative write each other in the sense that the terms used to construct an account of one man's life are also the terms used to construct the history and existing conditions of Philippine society and collectivity. Typical of nationalist-revolutionary memoirs, Tatang's life story offers itself both as a chart for tracing the trajectory of Philippine history over the past century and a particular interpretation of that history.¹³ Tatang's long life-span extends across more than seventy politically tumultuous years of Philippine modern history, spanning the American, Japanese, postwar, martial law, and "Edsa" periods (even though his narrative ends in the early 1980s). More important, he himself, as a veteran (*beterano*) of various revolutionary movements, in his various incarnations as "a rural poor boy, a sugar worker, an organizer, a guerrilla, a mass leader, [and] a Party cadre" ("Tatang's Life Story, A Story of Masses in Revolt," 1989), has played a part in that history, devoting his life and activities to realizing the goal of resisting the exploitation of Filipino workers and farmers, and paying the price for his involve-

ment in the struggle against a succession of oppressive regimes both foreign and Filipino.

Tatang's account of the roots of his political awakening—centered on his firsthand experience of exploitation and injustice as well as his witnessing of other people's suffering and resistance—offers not just an interpretation of Philippine history as a record of the nationalist struggle for freedom. It also contains a theory of representation in the political and artistic senses of "speaking for" and "speaking of" the nationalist subject. Its evocation of revolutionary nationalist subjectivity brings into play the idea of the national subject in both its singular and plural forms, the subject in the form of "a person" and in the form of "a people." As Kris Montañez (1988, 13) has argued in his review of Tatang's book: "The vivid sequential recall of events, dates, personalities and places enlivens moments in history in which Tatang played a part, highlighting both his character as a revolutionary and the nature of the Filipino people's revolutionary struggle from the earlier decades to the present." *Tungki* locates history and politics not simply in the actions of individuals within a given domain, but in the interaction between and among individuals that takes place within an arena of collective struggle. This notion of person/people offers an alternative way of imagining the nation in direct opposition to the prevailing official nationalist hegemony and the latter's espousal of the "free"-floating, autonomous, heroic individual who influences or inspires others by sheer force of her charisma or personality.

The theory of representation in *Tungki* can be gleaned from the way in which the book reworks the conventions of the auto/biographical genre and its practice by interrogating and unraveling the oppositions between public and private, between person and community, self and others—oppositions that police the parameters for writing conventional personal and national life stories and, more generally, for practicing politics. *Tungki* holds up a reinvigorated notion of autobiography as a potentially progressive genre for recuperating and empowering politically marginalized voices, as well as recasting the

terms of nationalist representation (again understood as proxy and portrait) in potentially liberating ways.

Auto/biography as Self-Productive Fiction

The word "autobiography" combines three principal root words from Greek for "self," "life," and "writing." Its appearance in the English language at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the American and French revolutions, which, as James Goodwin (1993, 3) has argued, "greatly advanced the cultural and political importance of the common individual." Although studies of the self as well as life histories were produced long before this period, the new term indexed the growing recognition and importance accorded individual experience in Western societies. The centrality given to an experiencing self—the "individual" abstracted from the group and now taken as a distinct category in relation to, and sometimes in opposition to, "society" (Williams 2001 [1961], 89, 93)¹⁴—laden with political and cultural value, a self whose worth as a unique and complex being who nevertheless shares in the humanity of the rest of society is indisputable, reformulated existing political and cultural issues concerning, for example, the spiritual "absolutes" that are said to condition human destiny and activity. But it also foregrounds new issues concerning language, social categories, and personal understanding through its affirmation of a value system that upholds self-identity, autonomy, authority, self-reference, self-determination, self-presence, self-love, and individualism (R. Smith 1995, 59).

The self—or what we might more accurately label an *interiority complex*—occupies a central place in its own narrative. The self becomes both a legitimate subject and object of her inquiry or study. Furthermore, this conflation rests on fundamental assumptions about the authoritative "truth" of the subject's "direct" access to—through her experience of—reality.¹⁵ This claim to "experience" as evidence enables the subject to present her vision or knowledge as a reference point and basis of explanation and analysis. Perhaps the most crucial effect of this claim to experience is its propounding of the theory of

the "self" as *having* experience rather than being *produced* by that experience. Joan W. Scott (1998, 61) argues

"Experience," whether conceived as internal or external, subjective or objective, establishes the prior existence of individuals. When it is defined as internal, it is an expression of an individual's being or consciousness; when external, it is the material upon which consciousness then acts. Talking about experience in these ways leads us to take the existence of individuals for granted (experience is something people have) rather than ask how conceptions of selves (of subjects and their identities) are produced.

The interiority complex that is "the self" is to a great extent shaped by available public, political, and cultural discourses of identity and truth telling (Gilmore 1994, 1, 15; see also chapter 2). It is these discourses—codified in the various but overlapping domains of law, literature, religion, and politics—which inform the genre of auto/biographical writing by determining the mode and context of its telling, and its reception among readers.

This discursive regime of truth and identity has its roots in the historic conjoining of capitalism and "democracy" within the bounds of the nation-state. New republics with emergent capitalist economies require their "people"—now conceived as "citizens"—to see themselves as equal, free, autonomous, and rational subjects, in short, as "individuals" and potential consumers of goods, products, and services (S. Smith 1998, 109–10). Moreover, these citizen-subjects, in turn, require "disciplining," not simply through external policing of their dispositions, thoughts, and actions, but through internal self-regulation and -scrutiny. The interiority complex endows bodies with "naturalized" surfaces and depths, insides and outsides, with naturalized identities that are gendered, racialized, sexed, classed, locatable within specific sociopolitical and economic spaces and hierarchies. It regulates, organizes, and primes these bodies for commercial expropriation and consumption, cultural expression, and political gestures

and behaviors within the larger, nationalized body politic. It fixes the self in a place, a social location, a culture, in time, in history, and in reality. More important, the self becomes legible and intelligible¹⁸ to an audience for whom the value system and the discourses of identity and truth which regulate that system are both familiar and "true" as to also be natural, and, therefore, readily taken for granted.

The book, *Sa Tungkong Ilong ng Kaaway*, telescopes events in Tatang's life in a mere sixty-two pages. Readers race through Tatang's birth on 21 August 1910, in Bacnotan, La Union, to his childhood, much of it spent alone in a hut by the coast and interrupted only by weekend visits up the Cordilleras to visit his mother and bring back coconuts, cogon, and wood for sale. In 1920 his sister Loreta dies of cholera at age five, and four years later death comes to their household again, this time for his father. After his sister's death, Tatang's mother falls into a deep depression and begins a nomadic life as a sharecropper, moving the family with her to Tarlac and across Central Luzon. Tatang finishes Grade 5, skips a number of grades, but is unable to attend school after his father's death. He obtains work in 1926 at a sugarcane plantation in Pampanga, where he works sixteen hours or more a day and is paid eighty centavos for every ton of cane loaded into the freight cars. He witnesses the abuses of the labor contractor, the privileges and high pay accorded foreign workers, and the repressive measures adopted by the hacienda owners who employ private armies to keep workers in check.

During his two-year experience, the idea that the exploitative system needs to be resisted and changed begins to take root in his head: "Noon pa mang mga panahong yaon, 1926–1928, unti-unti nang namumuno sa aking isip na ang ganitong mga patakarán at ang hirap na dinaranas namin ay dapat hanapan ng paraan kung papaano tutulan" (Even during that time, 1926–1928, it began to slowly take shape in my mind that the rules and hardship that we lived by had to be resisted) (Lacara 1988, 22–23). Tatang also works to clear the forest for hacienda use. In 1929, he begins to be involved in unionizing while employed at the sugar *sentral* (mill) in Cabiao, Nueva

Ecija, in Central Luzon. His fame spread among workers in the adjoining provinces. In 1930-1931, he helps organize a huge workers' strike at the sugar mill, and is fired from his job. In 1931, he joins the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP, the first Communist Party of the Philippines), and spearheads strikes protesting usury, dismal working conditions, and compulsory service at the employers' house, and compulsory gift giving to the representatives of the bosses. He continues his organizing work in Central Luzon and the Southern Tagalog region while working in a sawmill in Bitulok and Tayabas. His involvement in organizing sawmill workers almost costs him his life when he is ambushed one evening by unknown parties. Upon recovering, he is sent to Isabela by the Party to organize sawmill workers.

When Japan invades the Philippines, Tatang finds himself in Candating, Arayat. Over the next few years, as he joins up with the guerrilla resistance forces of the Hukbalahap, he faces starvation, and is briefly captured by—but manages to escape from—the enemy. He is with the Chinese Squadron 48 which forms the expeditionary force that is responsible for “cleaning up” Manila in early 1945. After liberation, he goes back to school, and concentrates on organizational work for the Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO). The CLO is suppressed by the government, and in 1952, Tatang is captured. Tatang is released after five years in captivity. He observes that political prisoners are treated with more respect by the authorities and guards, who—whether in jest or not, Tatang is not sure—place them in the same heroic tradition as that of national heroes Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, and Apolinario Mabini: “Medyo iginagalang kami ng mga awtoridad, pulis at iba pa. Sinasabi nila na mga bilanggong bayani kami, na diumano’y ipinagpapatuloy natin ang bandas na sinimulan ng mga Rizal, Mabini at Bonifacio. Hindi ko malaman kung ito’y pagkutyang lamang, pero talagang naiiba ang bilanggong pulitika” (The authorities, police and others accord us some respect. They say we are heroes who are continuing the struggle initiated by Rizal, Mabini and Bonifacio. I don’t know if they are merely mocking me, but political prisoners are really different) (40).

After Tatang is freed, he works among the masses of workers without any formal affiliation with the PKP. In 1961, he and a number of other people organize in Barrio Magsaysay, Tondo, to face off a band of neighborhood tough guys (*maton*) intent on grabbing land. When the barrio is razed to the ground, Tatang, together with his family, moves to Constitution Hill in Quezon City, and establishes a cooperative there. In 1964, Tatang is politically active in both Tondo and Quezon City. Tatang is present at the establishment of the new Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968. From the 1970s to the early 1980s, Tatang is sent to do expansion work by opening such areas for the Communist Party-New People’s Army as Pangasinan and La Union; Eastern Rizal; the Kalinga-Apayao, Abra, and the Ilocos Sur boundary area; and Central Luzon. He spends almost one year again in the Cordilleras, living and organizing among farmers and befriending Apayao hunters. In his travels across Luzon, he finds the aid and protection of townspeople necessary for his own safety and for his continuing political work. Eventually, he returns to Manila, where he is active in the labor movement.

Readers who are accustomed to expect auto/biographies to provide details and information about Tatang’s “private” life will find the book disappointing, if not problematic. Tatang does not really offer many details about himself and his family. He refers only once to having owned a lot in the province, which he is forced to sell to obtain bail money. His account of organizational activity in various provinces appears perfunctory, and the book contains only thumbnail sketches of labor leaders and activists. A positive and sympathetic review of Tatang in the Communist Party of the Philippines organ *Ang Bayan* states thus: “Tatang . . . seemed to have missed discussing the significant turning points in his life. For instance, why did he join the Party? How did he view the communists? Why did he decide to join the reestablished Party in 1968? . . . One wishes . . . that Tatang could have delved more deeply into the important landmarks in the Party’s advance and retreat, to give the readers, especially those who are not Party members, a historical summing up of the Party’s development.

Still, the book as it is serves as a valuable material for scholars who want to study the twists and turns of Party history" ("Tatang's Life Story, a Story of Masses in Revolt" 1989)."

Dipesh Chakrabarty (1996, 230) has argued that Indian historiography is similarly characterized by themes of "failure," "lack," or "inadequacy," seen in the supposed erasure of the "private" aspects from representations of the public self. But, as will be argued in this chapter, such reticence about the private features of the public self is not a question of lack, failure, or inadequacy, but a rhetorical-political strategy that attempts to highlight individual achievement without marginalizing collective activism.

This can be seen in the narrative form of Tatang's book. For a text that calls itself a *tambuhay* (in Tagalog, literally, "life-notes"), the auto/biographical narrative actually takes up only the first part, and the first sixty-two pages of *Tungki*. The bulk of the book consists of "supplementary" materials, a dedication page, a reproduction of a segment of Tatang's handwritten account; acknowledgments; publisher's note (*tala mula sa pabliser*); a foreword (*paunang salita*) by a comrade known only by his nom de guerre, Ka Bino; an introduction entitled "Mga Tala mula sa Andergrawnd" (Notes from the Underground) by Elias de la Cruz, also a pseudonym; twenty-nine pages of black-and-white photographs; a forty-two-page part two of the book, "Sari-saring Salaysay" (Miscellaneous Accounts), consisting of four essays of varying lengths; and eight pages of endnotes.

One can argue that the reader's disappointment at Tatang's seeming marginalization from his own text is itself conditioned by conventions of reading and writing that demand characterization, coherence, closure, depth, motivation, completeness, reflection, and summation in a text. Viewed through this normative prism, *Tungki* appears unpolished, monochromatic, flat, an artistic and ideological failure. But it is precisely these conventions of reading and writing—and the kinds of identities they produce and legitimate—that need to be historicized and questioned (Garcellano 1998). Conventions of reading which demand the immediate accessibility and transparency of a life are specific

to a practice of reading that may not fully square with reading practices required by a work in which secrecy and reticence are the leitmotifs.

Those who judge revolutionary literature and find it wanting need to reconsider the social locations and ideological positions from which they proceed to tackle a given text. Where a text is read, how it is read, and by whom, cannot be taken for granted, let alone dismissed. Revolutionary literature constructs its reader and author differently from the kind of literature that is written and read within academia. For this reason, Edel Garcellano (2003, 4) argues, "[t]he success or failure of the ideals of a proletarian poetics cannot be definitively settled in the mainstream inasmuch as the movement itself operates clandestinely and whatever insight the urban reader himself can avail of in terms of publications like *Gera* [another underground novel] remains inchoate and can only serve as supplements to the normatively given because they too linger on the margin, the curriculum cannot appropriate them as must readings, and few are the pedagogues steeped in Marxist discourse to give justice to the complexities of mediations, differences, ideologemes."

The remaining sections of this chapter look at how *Tungki* interrogates conventions of reading and writing, and offers an alternative framework for conceiving of and practicing auto/biography, one that argues in favor of the radical potential of experience and writing as sites for collective intellectual and political experimentation that blasts through the bourgeois reification of the seamless, coherent, autonomous, avowedly depoliticized self enshrined not only in standard auto/biographical writing, but in Philippine politics as well.

One can begin by addressing the paucity of details in the book concerning Tatang's private life and family. He makes no mention of having married and having children. References to his siblings, wife, children, and nephews and nieces crop up halfway through his account, in 1954, in connection with his incarceration. He includes a story of his wife's frustrating experience of trying to obtain emergency provisions from a local government office after Barrio Magsaysay burned down. The foodstuff is released only after Tatang loses his

patience, storms into the office, and loudly berates the officials (Lacara 1988, 44).

The relative absence of details concerning Tatang's private life locates Tarang's talambuhay within the ambit of the memoir,¹⁸ with its broad historical scope, its focus on the recollections of a subject who witnesses or participates in historically significant events. Memoirs are often concerned with recording the words and actions of people other than the author, but what distinguishes them as narrative forms is their emphasis on public rather than private life (J. Goodwin 1993, 6).

Ramon Guillermo (2003), recounting his experience of conducting writing workshops among workers, identifies three stages in the process of storytelling (*Iwentuhan at pagkulewentuhan*):

In the first stage, the worker simply relates what he deems to be the most significant facts of an experience (such as a strike) without comment or complaint. One worker even forgot to mention that an attack on their picket line occurred at night. The storyteller in this first stage is extremely reticent and seems to avoid highlighting his own feelings and personality in the account. This is the result of what [Paolo] Freire (1996 [1970]) called the "culture of silence." So brutally have they been "put in their place" by society at large that they have seemingly been robbed of the power of speech. The second phase is the questioning and elaborating phase. Here we can seek to fill both the factual gaps of the story and work to bring out the internal experience of the storyteller. This process of going back and forth between the listeners and the storyteller (sometimes involving dramatization in order to gather all the facts together) serves to enrich the story.

Guillermo's reference to the "culture of silence" is a forceful reminder of the central place of conversation, of dialogue as an interlocutory process of telling and listening and asking and answering and arguing, in conditioning self-expression, even as it pointedly

reveals the conditions of oppression that work to restrict if not truncate the workers' speech.

It is also possible that Tatang's reticence about his private life may be a question of shielding his family's identity—in line with his decision not to give his legal name—against the surveillance of the state. This silence is a preventive measure against possible interception and reprisal by "the enemy" (*ang kaaway*). But this may owe something as well to how Tatang understands the political import of his autobiographical project. As a document of his participation in the broader field of struggle and resistance along with (*kasama ng*) millions of other *mamamayan* (countrymen and countrywomen), Tatang's book is meant to be read not just by those who sympathize with Tatang's cause, but by the enemy (or, in this case, a number of different enemies ranging from the American to the Japanese to postcolonial Philippine authorities) as well. As its title *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway* suggests, the book lists Tatang's brushes, so to speak, with the law, but the book also positions itself as a text "on the tip of the enemy's nose": It directs its challenge at the enemy by wresting from the enemy the space of representation in which to assert the kind of social and political experience traditionally excluded from a public sphere that is ideologically dominated and controlled by the enemy. But Tatang knows very well that thumbing one's nose at the enemy can have dire consequences, not just for Tatang, but for his immediate family, relatives, and friends. Silence here makes all the difference between saving other people's lives and sacrificing them needlessly.¹⁹

At the same time, Tatang's life story is an important contribution to Philippine social history and political thought because it showcases the experiences and voices of those who have been excluded from the spheres of political representation and publication. Auto/biography becomes a weapon that empowers those who are extirpated from the biography of the Philippine nation as written and propounded by the official national state. *Tungki* realizes auto/biography's potential to serve as a venue for the articulation of the "voices" of the marginalized, displaced, or oppressed.

Textualizing the Self with/for Others

Feminist scholar May Datuin takes Tatang's book to task for its sexist portrayal of women by remarking on the virtual absence of women in the narrative, and the textual gaps and silences which signal the marginalization of Filipino women's important contributions to revolutionary resistance and struggle from Philippine history. (This point will be tackled in the next chapter.) She notes that Tatang does acknowledge the role of women leaders in the revolutionary movement, but takes the book to task for its cursory treatment of the lives of these women: "[I]pinakilala sila, hindi bilang mga indibidwal na may sariling personalidad kundi bilang adjunct lamang ng kanilang mga asawa" (They are introduced not as individuals with their own personalities, but as adjuncts of their husbands) (Datuin 1992, 102). She further argues that Tatang chooses only to tackle the lives of prominent male activists such as Cipriano Cid, Vicente del Fierro, Crisanto Evangelista, Mariano Balgos, and Felixberto Olalia.

Moreover, she claims that Tatang's book is ideologically problematic because women have no real bearing on Tatang's autobiography: "Sa kuwento ni Tatang, halos walang silbi ang mga babae" (In Tatang's story, the women are almost of no use). Tatang mentions his sister only in connection with her early death. He portrays his mother and wife as weak and silent women, too easily bowed by the trials and tragedies in their lives (103). Datuin's critique that the individuals mentioned in the autobiography are lacking in characterization lays bare the problematic, gendered nature of autobiographical representation which seeks to be both representative and to represent the life of a single individual.

Over the past thirty years, *auto/biography* has become one of the preferred forms of writing by which women, people of color, working classes, and other groups in positions of relative powerlessness seek to insert themselves into history and culture through their assertion of a "personal" voice that also speaks beyond itself for others (Swindells 1995, 7). But how in fact does one move from speaking for *one* self to speaking for others without running aground in the problem-

atic shoals of representative politics? Can one really speak for others? Can one adequately represent others without excluding some?

Tungki exposes the constitutive role of social and political conditions in discursively fashioning the self. Instead of establishing the self as the origin of knowledge, it points ineluctably to the intertextuality of the autobiographical project of narrating the self. Tatang's "identity" as a man of conviction and action is neither self-evident nor inherent. The experiences that form the bases of narration and action are discursively constructed. Auto/biography is a self-productive fiction not only because it draws on rhetorical strategies typically employed in the writing of fiction, but because the older etymological sense of "fiction" (*fictio*) as something made or crafted attests to the effort at self-fashioning that attends—rather than precedes—the writing of that self.

Tungki as a text not only bears the imprint of other texts; it calls explicit attention to its interweaving with other texts. Like *A Song in Nanyang Piaoliuji*, Tatang talks about having read, in his youth, publications in both Tagalog and English, such as *Kalayaan*, *Socialism Today*, Teodoro Asedillo's *ABK*, Karl Marx's *Capital*, Marx and Friedrich Engels's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Joseph Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, and *Wage, Labor and Capital*, among others. Not only does Tatang learn from the example set by activists, he derives inspiration from stories told of revolutionary efforts such as the Tayug rebellion in 1931, and the texts he reads help him make sense of Philippine sociopolitical reality, and suggest solutions to the problems currently plaguing Philippine society.

Tungki also highlights its own embeddedness in discourse through its inclusion of heterogeneous formats for documenting history. Its black-and-white photographs are reproduced from printed sources such as archives, newspapers, books, commemorative brochures, and drawings. The endnotes, prepared and appended by the editorial committee of LINANG, further supplement Tatang's text by providing definitions of terms (words like *atab*, *ipinalalawag*, *paksol*, *tulisapi*, *timbugan*, *kadua*, *puting purok*), tidbits of historical information (when the CLO was organized, present names of the towns mentioned by

Tatang), biographical data (Mateo del Castillo, Juan Feleo, Teodoro Asedillo, Jacinto Manahan, General Mariano Castañeda), explanations and glosses (for example, the intensification of repressive measures adopted by the state against the CLO, errors in the Huk strategy of "retreat for defense" when waging guerrilla warfare against the Japanese forces), references to books and other textual sources (among them, Renato Constantino's *The Philippines, A Past Revisited*, Alfredo B. Saulo's *Communism in the Philippines*, Benedict Kerkvliet's *The Huk Rebellion*, and Amado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution*), and short accounts of some of the events mentioned in passing by Tatang (the September 1944 conference organized by the PKP, the Pacific War, the proclamation of martial law by Ferdinand Marcos).

Tungki attests to the collective effort that went into the production of Tatang's talambuhay. Kris Montañez's account of the writing and publication history of the manuscript itself bears quoting in full:

Tatang's handwritten manuscript, on which the present book was based, has a story to tell. While in an underground house in Metro Manila in the early 1980s, the young cadres he stayed with would ask him to tell stories about his long history of work in the movement. Later, they would devise a set of questions for the *beterano* to answer as he moved from one house to another. The answers, in turn, would give ground for more questions, clarifications, details. This process went on until 1984, when the entire manuscript was turned over to a staff for editing and possible publication. Work on the manuscript was off and on due to various reasons; however, edited sections managed to appear in some mass publications such as *Tambuli* and *Pahayag*.

In 1986, LINANG, publisher of the well-known 1984 anthology *Magsasaka, Ang Bayaning Di Kilala*, took charge of the project. One of the first problems raised by the project staff was the method of dealing with such a manuscript, as a historical document, should not the texts be kept as they are, as suggested by

some academic historiographers; shouldn't the variants/elaborations be integrated in the main texts, thus avoiding duplications and achieving a continuous narrative run; or should not the main texts serve as the main narrative line, followed by elaborations on certain topics contained in the main narrative?

The last option was taken, as it followed the original format of the manuscript. Since the book was meant to reach a wider audience and not just a narrow circle of academic scholars, the demand for readability made it necessary to excise some repetitive lines, cut, fuse, or transfer sentences, and standardize spelling. Data contained in the manuscript had to be checked out in history books. In addition, notes, photographs, and maps had to be prepared.

The project staff maintained close consultation with Tatang, to press him for more exact details and to discuss with him current debates within the movement. Staff members took photographs of him whenever he was in his workplace in Manila; they visited him once in a house in Northern Luzon while recuperating from a surgical operation, with his wife close by to nurse him. (Montañez 1988, 13-14)

Tungki foregrounds the labor put in not just by Tatang but by members of the editorial collective who offered words of encouragement, support, and solidarity; read, critiqued, and edited Tatang's manuscript; conducted archival research; and did production work (book design, cover design, photography, transcription, printing). In this sense, *Tungki* is both an autobiography and a biography because of the multiplicity of voices and interventions that informs its material and symbolic production.

The visibility of collective effort makes *Tungki* an auto/biography of a self "with others" that is also a self responsible to and for others.²⁰ One danger in autobiographical writing is its tendency to erase "others" from its narrative. Auto/biographies of politicians, for example, typically endow their subjects with superhuman prowess and at-

tributes to the point that even when politicians claim to speak for "the people," they end up placing themselves above "the people" and effectively displacing the people as speaking and acting subjects of history and politics. In other words, these exemplary selves narrated in writing usurp the place of "the people" they claim to represent or speak for.

Tatang's book is a welcome antidote to this tendency toward erasure of others from the auto/biographical narrative. It is, in a very literal and material sense, the auto/biography of these "others" who participated not just in the writing but, as will be argued in this section, in the reading, in the production through writing and reading not just of Tatang's self, but of Philippine history as well. Unlike mainstream autobiographies by politicians that rely on "ghostwriting" by others who sign over their manuscripts to their subjects in exchange for money, sometimes sweeping all traces of other people's labor in producing the book under the disingenuous byline of the autobiographer, *Tungki* attests to an alternative practice—typical of many publications of the so-called underground or revolutionary movement²¹—that opens the writing self to "others." In the self can be discerned traces of the collective through the very formation of the self. In this sense, *Tungki* bears out the poststructuralist insight that an "[a]utobiography is an all-inclusive genre precisely to the extent that it remains impossible to conclude which life is being written—or read" (Kamuf 1988, 126).

Moreover, this radical inclusiveness is suggested by the etymology of the Tagalog word for auto/biography, *talambuhay*, which is derived from the root words *tala*, "notes," and *buhay*, "life"—literally, "notes on [a] life." The Tagalog term foregrounds the textual effort that goes into the production of both "life" and "a life." Its blurring of the boundaries between life in general and life in particular short-circuits the assumption—embedded in Western practices of auto/biography—that "life-notes" are necessarily and only accounts of certain individuals. The word "*talambuhay*" questions the limits and boundaries between person and community, stressing the plural, communal aspects inherent in the singular ex-

perience of living. Finally, the word "*tala*" does not presuppose an exhaustive narrative, but rather a selective notation marking moments in a life.

Tungki's constitutive blurring of boundaries between self and others forces a reconsideration of the problem of positing a "collective" nationalist subject in nationalist theory and practice. Fredric Jameson (1986, 69) has written of the need to think through more carefully the assumption that the testimonies of those involved in anticolonial and revolutionary struggles necessarily foreground the voice of a "collective subject." How is this collectivity posited in the first place? What kind of "subjectivity" does this collectivity have, and how is that subjectivity constructed?

The difficulties of positing this collective nationalist subject can be seen in Tatang's account. Tatang often refers to "the masses" (*masa*), "the countrymen/women" (*mamamayan*) as though they were separate or at least distinct from him: "[I]natupag ko ang pag-oorganisa sa masa at tumulong akong maitayo ang nukliyas ng Partido mula antas ng samahang pambaryo, seksyon, distrito hanggang komiteng panlalawigan ng Partido sa Nueva Ecija na nakasentro sa Cabanatuan" [I concerned myself with organizing among the masses and helped set up the nucleus of the Party from the level of the barrio, section, and district all the way to the Party's city committee in Nueva Ecija centered in Cabanatuan] (Lacara 1988, 28).

At the same time, he is careful to stress his "being with" the masses ("ako ay kasama ng mamamayan") in the course of his activism. Asked why he has been charged with rebellion by the state, Tatang replies: "Sapagkat kasama ako ng mamamayan sa paglaban sa ating kaaway (because I was with the people in fighting our enemy)" (13). Tatang's immersion among the *masa* is crucial to his political work as an organizer, since his work demands that he actively seek out communities among which he must labor to win over their support and sympathy and solicit their participation in the revolutionary movement. His constant interaction with the *masa* strengthens his own convictions and his determination to continue his work.

"The people" is a bifurcated notion. On the one hand, it refers to a sociological notion of the masses as an aggregate of individuals who remain to be politicized and among whom Tatang must live and with whom he must interact in hopes of building a nucleus of resistance and support against the enemy. On the other hand, it refers to "the masses" as a collective agent of history whose politicized consciousness intensifies and maximizes the nationalist struggle and resistance against the oppressive forces of society and forms the basis of the revolutionary movement itself. To attempt to speak of and speak for the masses is necessarily to tackle a difficult conceptual and practical question for which no easy answer is available. While it is easy to invoke "the people" in symbolic terms, is it possible at all to represent the masa in absolute terms as an existing collective without resorting to exclusion or coercion or violence, or else usurping the speaking place and power of the people? It is precisely the theoretically and practically fraught nature of "representing the masa" that demands continued and sustained intellectual reflection and political work.

In *Tingki*, "self" is not just a self "for" and responsible "to" others. It is the self *as* others. The impetus for the writing of the *talambuhay*, in fact, comes from requests by younger cadres, who have prepared questions that serve as guidelines for Tatang's writing. Tatang's replies, in turn, generate more questions that lead to further clarification and explanation: "Sa katunayan, ang pagkakasulat ng kanyang *talambuhay* ay pagpapaunlak sa kahilingan ng mga kabataang reholusyonaryo na matuto sa buhay at karanasan ng isang beterano ng rebolusyon. Naghanda ng mga tanong ang mga bagong reholusyonaryo para magsilbing gabay sa kanyang pagsusulat, at ang mga sagot ay nagbigay daan sa maraming pang-pagtatunong at pagpapaliwanag" (in truth, his [Tatang's] autobiography was written in response to the young revolutionaries' wish to learn from the life and experiences of a veteran of the revolution. The new revolutionaries prepared questions to serve as guidelines for his writing, and the answers in turn gave rise to more questions and clarifications) ("Tala mula sa Pabliser," in Lacara 1988, 11).

Tatang's narrated life as a veteran revolutionary is shaped by concerns encapsulated into a series of questions put to him by younger revolutionaries—concerns that have to do with everyday exigencies in the movement of boosting cadre morale, articulating a progressive view of Philippine history as narrative of the national liberation struggle, and deepening insights into Philippine sociopolitical reality. The textual recovery of a history of continuing Philippine revolutionary endeavors framed by the life-span of a man involved in advancing the struggle is not simply an intellectual exercise, but a political act which seeks to empower succeeding generations of readers by positing a "revolutionary" identity and agency with which to challenge and dismantle the existing order, and imagine and realize a better future.

If politics has an aesthetic dimension, aesthetics also has a political dimension, since the very logic of both political and aesthetic representation works by implicitly inviting or persuading people (whether readers or political subjects) to place themselves within, if not actually identify with, a certain point of view (Ankersmit 2002, 234). Tatang makes numerous exhortations about the need for struggle and resistance against the oppressive forces of "U.S. imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism": "Itimuring ko nang kayamanan yaong pagpapaunlad ko sa gawain sa ngalan ng makauring kilusan" (I considered it wealth enough that I was able to help advance the cause of the class struggle) (Lacara 1988, 24). Tatang's decision to join the revolutionary movement is informed by his firsthand experience and witnessing of the abuses and exploitation of Filipinos by Filipinos in Philippine society. "Maliwanag na nadadama at matiryal na nakikita ko na walang ibang nagbunsod sa akin at sa maraming aping mamamayan na durugin at wakasan ang dambuhalang salot ng lipunan" (It was clear that nothing other than what I could actually feel and see for myself would push me and other oppressed people to crush and put to an end the monstrous ills of society) (ibid.).

In his foreword, Ka Bino testifies to the impact that Tatang's epigrammatic statements have on him. An emaciated Tatang, still suffering the after-effects of pneumonia and facing charges of rebel-

lion following the suppression of the CLO, impresses Ka Bino with his quiet fortitude:

"Bakit kayo nasangkot sa rebelyon?"

"Sapagkat kasama ako ng mamamayan sa paglaban sa ating kaaway." (13)

"Why were you implicated in the rebellion?"

"Because the people and I fought the enemy together."

Twelve years later, Tatang responds to Ka Bino's query about how to become a member of the movement with the words: "Basta gumawa ka ng mabuti para sa masa, mabuhay at makibaka sa interes ng anakpawis. Darating ang panahon na may lalapit at hihimok sa iyo" (As long as you do good things for the masses, live and struggle with them, prioritize the advancement of the working people's interests, the time will come when you will be approached and invited [to join the movement]) (ibid.). Tatang speaks from his experience, offering words of support when Ka Bino is detained by the Marcos government in the early 1980s: "Balita ko'y malungkot ka. Matuwa ka imbis na malungkot. Isang malaking karangalan ang makulong sa ilalim ng mapanil na rehimeng ito. Maliit na bahagi lamang iyan ng ating pakikibaka. Magsikap na lumaya para muling sumama sa pagkilos" (I heard that you are sad. You should be happy instead of being sad. It is an honor to be imprisoned under an oppressive regime. That is just a small part of our struggle. Strive to free yourself so that you can rejoin the movement) (ibid.).

The power of Tatang's exhortation²² lies in its simplicity and directness, in the clarity with which it lays out the issues that Ka Bino confronts under duress. The simplicity of Tatang's words, however, does not make his epigrammatic statements simplistic, since they are actually distillations of Tatang's long and complex experiential history and concrete practices, as well as the experiential history and theory-in-practice of the CPP-NPA in the course of its development

and struggles. Tatang learns from his experience, and it is this learning that he imparts to Ka Bino. Tatang's life becomes an exemplary text from which the younger revolutionaries derive lessons in history, politics, and activism, and in the difficult formulation and implementation of revolutionary work. It inspires the young revolutionaries to continue if not further intensify their struggle. Tatang's narrative fuels his readers' love for country and desire for their country's liberation.²³

To write the self is to write social history. Writing spurs action, closing the gap between theory and practice, between self and others. Tatang's autobiography establishes a pact among author, text, and reader outside the strictures of prevailing norms for constituting the "national" subject put forward by official nationalist discourse and practice. This pact turns auto/biography into a medium of communication, a way of creating dialogue and debate between and among activists and members of revolutionary groups. But Tatang's life-story also functions to *create* revolutionaries when it is wielded as one of the instruments of mass mobilization by "example."

The exemplariness of Tatang's life derives no less from the fact that Tatang thinks of himself, and is held up by others in the text, as ordinary, typical. His ordinariness enhances his acts of heroism, but it is also possible to argue—as revolutionary literature has done—that he is heroic *because* he is ordinary.²⁴ "Isa siyang ordinaryo't dukhang tao, pero tulad ng milyun-milyong ordinaryo't dukhang tao sa lipunang malakolonyal at malapyudal, isa siyang natatanging lakas sa pagsusulong ng pundamental na mga pagbabago sa lipunan" (He is an ordinary, indigent person, but just like the millions of ordinary and poor people living in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, he is a distinctive force in bringing about fundamental change in society) (ibid., 13). Tatang's ordinariness issues an explicit challenge to historiographical reliance on documenting the lives of "great" or prominent leaders by arguing that history is made by those whose lives often remain undocumented or marginalized in standard historiographies. Tatang's life stands out precisely because it shares in the thoughts and actions of "millions and millions" of ordinary and indigent Fili-

pinos whose lives and labors are at once subject to expropriation by capital and the neocolonial state yet also capable of effecting fundamental, radical changes in Philippine society.

The Openness of Revolutionary Subjectivity and Nation

The revolutionary subjectivity constructed and made available by *Tungki* is one that explicitly disavows the closure, coherence, autonomy, depoliticization, even the very visibility of the auto/biographical subject. The book itself does not even carry an authenticated proper name—there is no byline on the cover, and the subject of the book is known to readers (at least those who are not part of the underground)²⁵ only as a plethora of names, Ka Che (to Ka Bino, itself a pseudonym), Ka Cesar (to Elias de la Cruz, also a pseudonym), and, as Tatang himself lists in the opening sentence of his *talambuhay*, “Cesar, Rodel, Marcial, Lauro, Jose, Roy, Tatang at iba pa” (Lacara 1988, 19). The eponymous “Tatang” is less a proper name than an honorific term that expresses an interlocutory relationship between the old man and the person who addresses him as Tatang. In a lifetime of changing identities, Tatang’s proper name disappears into the general anonymity of an honorific title. It is the rhetorical disappearance of the individual into the collective that organizes the auto/biography and its central concerns about revolutionary struggle and its challenges.

Given the repressive measures of the state against the movement, the reticence about proper names is not just understandable, but a necessary strategy for self-protection. This multiplication of names calls attention to the nature of the revolutionary struggle that effaces the legal appellation sanctioned by the state in favor of aliases without surnames, each one anchored in a specific task or undertaking related to organizational and political work, a specific place and time, and a specific social relationship (with, say, Ka Bino and Elias de la Cruz).

It is precisely Tatang’s anonymity that allows him to acquire a reputation that spreads across the countryside, beyond his own person. *Tungki* provides an itinerary of Tatang’s secret journey across a

huge swath of Philippine territory and his encounters with Filipinos belonging to different ethnic and linguistic groups. The incidents in the book are linked together by a long chain of names of barrios, towns, and cities, and by the unfolding of geographically differentiated terrains ranging from mountains to plains to valleys to coasts. In fact, Tatang’s pseudonyms mark the spaces he traverses in the course of his political mission, even as they attest to the secrets (of and about the revolutionary movement) that Tatang knows and keeps. His multiple identities literally map the reaches of revolution. The names by which Tatang goes are also the names by which he moves through the Philippine landscape. This landscape is revealed not as a “mere” setting or “background” of national history, but as the contested arena of historical antagonisms and solidarities, civil strife and community.

Far from being a neutral ground for the enactment of revolutionary politics, the Philippine terrain is itself a means of revolutionary engagement in that it delimits Tatang’s political action by specifying the kind of work he needs to undertake in order to organize the masses. For example, he wins the confidence of the Apayao in the Cordilleras by accompanying them on their hunting expeditions, even though he has had no prior experience in hunting. Tatang’s work is determined by the specific social spaces he traverses. And the fact that the Apayao have hunted in defiance of government prohibition against game hunting underscores the extent to which a “politics of location” (Rich 1986, 212) organizes social relations and contestations between, on the one hand, indigenous groups who view the land as their home and, on the other hand, the nation-state that views the land as “national” property. Tatang’s auto/biography refashions the Philippine landscape as a terrain of memories of past and continuing struggles, a space for linking people otherwise differentiated by language and ethnicity. It emphasizes the role played by the politics of location in creating “national” identities, and in realizing the revolutionary goals of resistance against the state.

In keeping with the different names that Tatang adopts in his journeys, Tatang becomes a different somebody (farmer, sawmill

worker, union organizer, hunter, guerrilla) according to his mission and location. One may argue, of course, that, like most revolutionaries, Tatang often has to resort to disguises in order not to attract suspicion from the authorities while undertaking his political work. A disguise assumes a "core" personality that is fundamentally unchanged. But Tatang's experience is, as the word itself suggests, an experimentation in the crafting of revolutionary subjectivity. When he adopts the persona of a farmer, he lives and labors among the people as a farmer. He becomes his disguise. His subjectivity is multiple and flexible as it occupies different subject positions in space.

The dispersal of Tatang's subjectivity is even more emphatically underscored by the open-endedness of the auto/biography. Part one of *Tungki* goes under the heading "Hindi Pa Tapos ang Kwento" (The Story is Not Finished) and ends with the following paragraphs:

Hindi pa magwawakas ang kwento at nagpapatuloy pa ang labanan. 72 taon na ako ngayon, pumupwede pa kahit papaano. Marahil, magtatagal pa ang buhay ko, malakas-lakas pa rin ang katawan ko.

Mabuhay ang Rebolusyon! (Lacara 1988, 62)

The story isn't finished, and the struggle continues. I'm 72 years old now, and still able. Most likely, my life will stretch on, I am still strong.

Long live the Revolution!

By its very nature, autobiography is necessarily incomplete. Like fiction, and in fact often relying on the techniques of fiction, autobiographies and biographies select and organize their materials into meaningful patterns while leaving out "excess" events and experiences—there can never be any "complete" auto/biography which can adequately represent every minute and second of lived experience. But, unlike biographies, autobiographies stop short of documenting the entire life-span of the autobiographer. All autobiographies register

the experiential impossibility of recording the words "I died" on paper. The impossibility of recording the moment of one's death in one's own writing means that there will always be fragments of one's *finite* history that are beyond the grasp of self-representation. The open-endedness built into the autobiographical form turns the past tense of the autobiographical narrative, which signals an autobiographer's critical distancing of herself from her experience in time, into a present tense, which asserts the immediacy of the autobiographer's remembering and writing.

The open-endedness of Tatang's auto/biography is also borne out in the "supplementary," heterogeneous materials that make up more than half of the book. The four essays in part two, written by Tatang, build on Tatang's own narrative in part one by providing additional details. The Buencamino hacienda mentioned cursorily in part one, for example, receives ampler attention in the first few paragraphs of "Ang Cabiao" with descriptions of the house, the grounds, the numerous servants who populate the house and the caretakers and professionals who run the hacienda.

The essays encapsulate the highlights of Tatang's life at the same time that they contextualize Tatang's personal and political life and work by locating them firmly within a broader milieu of activism and resistance by comrades and fellow travelers. Thus, in the first essay, "Ang Cabiao," the eponymous town located south of Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon is the theater where Tatang's initiation into activism is staged through his firsthand experience as well as witnessing of laboring and exploitation in a hacienda, sugar mill, and sawmill. The second essay, "Ang Huk," recapitulates the story of Tatang's experience during the Pacific War as a member of the Hukbalahap, the guerrilla organization formed at the outbreak of World War II, and later reorganized after the war into the military arm of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, or the old Communist Party of the Philippines. The third essay, "Ang CLO," focuses on the Congress of Labor Organizations, the labor arm of the PKP, and its activities (demonstrations, strikes, and other mass actions), and presents brief

profiles of prominent activists and labor leaders. The fourth and shortest essay, "Ang Bagong Partido," recounts Tatang's itinerary through various provinces mainly in the northern Philippines and his participation in initial efforts to establish the new Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army in the late sixties. The personal and the political, the public and the private, are not just braided within the narrative of an "individual" account. This individual account is itself braided into a general account of the historical, social, and political narrative of various liberation struggles and movements in the Philippines.

To call these essays recapitulations of the preceding autobiographical narrative is something of a misnomer, because they do not simply repeat or summarize Tatang's auto/biographical narrative. Their reiteration of the major events in Tatang's life as well as Philippine revolutionary history generates differences in emphasis, additional data, dramatization, even revisions of the original account in the *talambuhay*.

In part one, Tatang narrowly escapes incarceration by the Japanese by claiming, in the company of a number of men, women, and Chinese, to be a Manila merchant scouring the countryside for food-stuff to buy and sell (33-34). In part two's "Ang Huk," this same version is recounted, but interestingly enough, the details themselves are remembered differently (*ibid.*, 113-14). The presence of children among the group, heretofore unmentioned, is recorded. The Chinese—known simply and generically as "ang mga Intsik" in part one—among the group are revealed to be "Chinese guerrillas" (*mga gerilyang Tsino*) whose participation in the anti-Japanese struggle is highlighted subsequently in Tatang's story of joining the Chinese Wha-Chi Squadron 48 in their "clean-up" of Manila during Liberation. The Chinese contribution to Philippine revolutionary nationalism is further memorialized in a photograph of the Wha-Chi guerrillas included in *Tungki*. In "Ang Cabiao," the events of March 1943 are recast with a substantial difference: Here it is the female activist leader, Marcosa dela Rosa, who saves Tatang's life by claiming to the

Japanese that Tatang is her husband, and that they are merchants from Manila in the company of the Chinese (107).

Tatang's book also includes stories which are not included in the autobiographical narrative of part one. The essay "Ang Cabiao" preludes Tatang's story of his mysterious encounter in the forest late one night with a big white man, whom he takes for an American (*isang malaking tao, parang Amerikano ang laki*) and whom no one else in his company sees, with the wry sentence: "May isang kwento akong di kapani-paniwala laluna sa mga Marxista at Leninistang materyalista" (I have a story that won't be believable especially to Marxist-Leninist materialists). By this sentence, Tatang marks an experiential "excess" that is not fully recuperable within the "materialist" narrative of struggle espoused by Marxism-Leninism.

These narrative repetitions-with-differences offer correctives to oversights resulting from the incomplete, selective workings of memory. They show that memory is not infallible, something that Tatang himself explicitly and repeatedly alludes to in a narrative that contains phrases like: "Hindi ko na matiyak kung 1968 o 1969 ito idinaos" (I am not sure if this [conference organized by the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism] was held in 1968 or 1969) and "Marahil ay Pebrero noon" (It may have been February then) in 1969, when Jose Maria Sison already went underground, that Tatang passed by Tarlac in Central Luzon.

The endnotes in *Tungki* supplement Tatang's memory with documents and stories by other people in the movement. The information in these endnotes sometimes diverges from Tatang's account. The editors cite Renato and Letizia Constantino's story of Teodoro Asedillo's death following the latter's encounter with government troops. The Constabulary parades Asedillo's bullet-ridden corpse from town to town. Tatang remembers attending a conference in Manila when news reached him that Asedillo has been killed by being nailed to a cross. The point is not so much that the information Tatang receives is inaccurate in its details, but that the gist of that (mis)information, conveyed in a distinctly religious idiom—that

Asedillo is "martyred" by the Constabulary—is substantively true. History in this sense is not a question of indisputable "facts," but of variable interpretation open to debate, contestation, and revision.

The fact that Tatang chooses anonymity over recognition as a writer is itself an act of refusal, which repudiates the kind of bourgeois individual subjectivity that assumes and privileges the author as the sovereign authority—the purveyor of "personal" experiential truth—on his or her own work.²⁶ Tatang's auto/biography is not just an "intertext" that links the writing of the self to questions of history. It posits history and the writing of history as a theory and practice of (re)visioning. Its account of the self as both effect and process of representation empowers readers to conceive and take advantage of opportunities for transforming both self and society, and for re-imagining and remaking the Philippine national community in a more rigorous, less exclusionary, more socially empowering and liberative way. If narratives of the self have routinely functioned to ensure the subjection of individuals to the dominant social and political order, *Tungki* shows how one particular narrative of the self can be vital to the subject's emancipation from and transformation of that order.²⁷

Tatang's account throws his life—and the Philippine nation—open to his readers, to others who are in a position to assess the merits of his actions. In doing so, he lays bare his life to the vicissitudes of time, thereby orienting both writing and action to the future. This constitutive opening up of self and nation to (correction by) others and to the future is the condition of possibility of Philippine literature and politics—it is because writing and action cannot end, because they are open to revision and change, that they need to be undertaken again and yet again. Moreover, ethics is not simply a matter of individual conscience. Its efficacy springs not just from the actions of an individual, but from the space opened up by the interaction between and among people.

The implications of this open-endedness extend to the idea of the Filipino nation as process, not product. There exists a general consensus on the desirability of Philippine nationness. Yet what is

striking about the Philippine discourse of nationness is that its idealistic belief in the goodness of the nation appears in the face of the everyday living reality of constant, seemingly insurmountable crises that constantly threaten if not actually undermine the project of making the nation. Those who are familiar with the Philippines always note the peculiar despair, laced with equal measures of extreme optimism and pessimism, that attends any discussion of the Philippine nation—the endless catalogue of failures, near-misses, could-have-been's or should-have-been's, the lamentations regarding the absence of Filipino identity, and the lack at the heart of Filipinoness that shadow even the most optimistic assessment of nation building (Cannell 1999, 6–9). The nation-building project is perennially shown to rest on fragile, if not dubious, foundations. Even the most intoxicated enthusiast of nation making is always sobered by the very real possibility of failure.

But rather than refuting or negating the project of nation making, the fragility of that project is the very condition of possibility of nationalist thought and action, of politics and history in fact. The ambivalence about nation making is ineradicably linked to the fact that the nationalist project of realizing community is not just "unfinished" but, rather, "unfinishable" (Ileto 1998 [1993]; Hau 2000a, 214–42). And it is this unfinishability—the fact that the "nation" is always made and unmade and remade—that makes it impossible to ever speak of the end of "history," the end of politics. It is the unfinishableness of the nation that gives this country its chances, turning every crisis into opportunity, conferring on that country the possibility of a future.

The timing of the publication of Tatang's auto/biography could not have been more apropos. As discussed in the previous chapter, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the Communist movement suffered a series of setbacks, including declining membership; military repression; an investigation in the mid-1980s into reports of military infiltration into the Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, and Mindanao units which turned into bloody purges that cost the lives

of nearly a thousand cadres, guerrillas, and activists; the "rectification" campaign that signaled the internal divisions within the Party along questions of strategy, ideology, assessment of the political climate and the "revolutionary situation"; personality differences; and the splitting of the Party into four different and contending groups. *Tungki's* emphasis on the continuity of the revolutionary tradition appears to cast Tatang as a lone voice of optimism in the wilderness of pessimistic denunciations and analyses of the "decline" of the Philippine Left, as the "ideological errors," missteps in strategies, and organizational weaknesses of the movement came to public light. The movement itself was in flux as it faced the challenge of reinventing itself anew in keeping with unfolding events, changing political needs, new opportunities for and modes of mass mobilization in the wake of the so-called rise of civil society, the Edsa Revolution, Edsa Dos, and Edsa Tres, and Filipino international migration.

But Tatang's life-story, which shows how knowledge produced in the experiment of living and struggling changes the knower (and the reader) and allows Tatang to undertake the revisioning not just of his life, identity, and future, but of "the people," is ultimately an article of hope and faith in the revolutionary movement and in the nation. His autobiography shows how experience is constructed through its embeddedness within a social, historical context and the theories of history and life that one finds or holds there. While experience cannot be assumed to be self-evident and always reliable, so that no a priori principles can guarantee in advance the reliability of experience as a source of knowledge, it would be wrong to argue that experience is always epistemologically suspect. Rather, experience involves a range of processes of organizing information, processes that entail constant reinterpretation, reevaluation, and adjudication. The openness of subjectivity to experiential revision, revaluation, and reinvention is the enabling condition not only of writing, but of politics.

Engendering the Revolutionary Body

WRITING IN FRANCE just five years before Jose Rizal published his novel *Noli me tangere* in Berlin, Germany, in 1887, Ernest Renan (1994, 17) in his influential *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* defined the nation as a "grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices which one has made and those that one is disposed to make again." Setting himself in opposition to those who would locate the basis of the nation in ideas of originary racial, territorial, economic, and linguistic unity, Renan argued instead for the historical origin and basis of the nation, stressing the voluntaristic aspect of people's social and psychological investment in the nation. The "will" and the willingness of people to live and work together are conditioned by shared memories as much as selective, communal amnesia, or forgetting, and by common experiences and collective accomplishments. But, above all, "this moral conscience which is called a nation" depends for its efficacy on the powerful, emotive charge and appeal of voluntary acts of "sacri-